

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend claims 1-10 and add new claim 11 as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended). ~~A sliding~~ sliding closing element for an intermediate distributor or similar metallurgical containers, comprising a ~~[[the]]~~ mobile sliding plate ~~[[(3) of]]~~ which can be driven by means of a drive comprising a driving rod
5 ~~[[(6)]]~~ and a push rod ~~[[(7)]]~~ connected thereto, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the connection between the driving rod ~~[[(6)]]~~ and the push rod ~~[[(7)]]~~ is formed by a coupling ~~[[(11)]]~~ arranged between ~~[[the]]~~ opposite ends of the driving rod and push rod ~~two rods~~ with two coupling parts ~~[[(12, 13)]]~~ that
10 engage each other without play.

Claim 2 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~sliding~~ closing element according to Claim 1, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the coupling ~~[[(11)]]~~ comprises ~~is formed by~~ a coupling head ~~[[(12)]]~~ and a coupling claw ~~[[(13)]]~~ that is received into the same by
5 means of form and force closure, ~~i.e. without play,~~ with a wedge shoe ~~[[(21)]]~~ spring tensioned transversely in relation to
~~[[the]]~~ a driving direction of the driving rod ~~[[(6)]]~~ and supported against the wedge shoe ~~[[(21)]]~~ pressing against the coupling head ~~[[(12)]]~~.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element according to Claim 2, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the coupling head ~~[[(12)]]~~ comprises ~~consists of~~ a component with a T-shaped cross-section that ~~comprises~~ includes a facing side engaging bridge ~~[[(14)]]~~ and an adjacent middle bridge ~~[[(15)]]~~.

Claim 4 (Currently Amended). A sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element ~~2, characterised in that the~~ comprising a coupling claw ~~[[(13)]]~~ ~~consists of~~ including a component with a U-shaped cross-section comprising a facing wall ~~[[(16)]]~~, a rear wall ~~[[(17)]]~~, two side walls ~~[[(18, 19)]]~~ and a floor plate ~~[[(20)]]~~, whereby the facing wall ~~[[(16)]]~~ ~~comprises~~ includes a central receiving slot ~~[[(24)]]~~ for ~~[[the]]~~ a middle bridge ~~[[(15)]]~~ of ~~[[the]]~~ a coupling head ~~[[(12)]]~~, ~~whilst~~ and the rear wall ~~[[(17)]]~~ and the floor plate ~~[[(20)]]~~ are equipped with support surfaces for ~~[[the]]~~ a wedge shoe (21), ~~i.e. for the springs (22a, 22b) tensioning the same.~~

Claim 5 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element according to Claim 4, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the wedge shoe ~~[[(21)]]~~ is tensioned by ~~means of~~ at least one spring

[[22a, 22b]] arranged along [[the]] a longitudinal axis of the driving rod [[6]].

Claim 6 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element according to Claim [[4 or]] 5, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the wedge shoe [[21]] is connected with a set screw [[25]] inserted through the centre of the floor plate [[20]]
5 of the coupling claw [[13]], which does not contact the floor plate [[20]] during operation, so that the height of the wedge shoe [[21]] can be adjusted transversely in relation to the driving direction.

Claim 7 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element according to Claim 6, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the wedge shoe [[21]] is maintainable ~~can be held~~ in position by ~~means of~~ the set screw [[25]] during coupling until the
5 specific coupling is complete, whereas the set screw [[25]] can be screwed in further during de-coupling, whereby the wedge shoe [[21]], and with it the coupling [[11]], can be disconnected.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element according to ~~one of the Claims~~ Claim [[2 to]] 7, wherein ~~characterised in that~~ the abutting surfaces of the coupling head

[[(12)]] and the coupling claw [[(13)]] include ~~are equipped with~~ tapered edges [[(30, 31)]].

Claim 9 (Currently Amended). The sliding ~~Sliding~~ closing element according to Claim 8, ~~characterised in that~~ wherein the coupling head [[(12)]] ~~consists of~~ includes an integrated part of the push rod [[(7)]].

Claim 10 (Currently Amended). A coupling ~~Coupling~~ for a sliding closing element according to Claim 1, wherein ~~one of the preceding Claims, characterised in that the same can be installed~~ coupling is installable into the sliding closing element as a
5 construction assembly ~~consisting of~~ including the coupling claw [[(13)]] and the coupling head [[(12)]] with the integrated push rod [[(7)]].

Claim 11 (New). A coupling for a sliding closing element according to Claim 4, wherein the coupling is installable into the sliding closing element as a construction assembly including the coupling claw and the coupling head with the integrated push rod.